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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7608th meeting
Monday, 25 January 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Diouf
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2015/1027)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2015/1027)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/1027, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the most recent developments in the situation in Darfur, in particular those that have occurred since the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/1027), on 24 December last.

The developments centre mainly on the resumption of armed conflict in the Jebel Marra region as well as clashes in West and North Darfur. This marks the end of the brief period of relative calm that was observed during the reporting period. In North Darfur, where Zaghawa villages were attacked by Arab militias on 27 November and 3 December, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) came under fire on two occasions: on 1 January by the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid, as it was attempting to recover a truck that had been stolen from the World Food Programme; and, on 7 January, when it was surrounded by some 60 Arab militia members as it was heading to Anka to protect the Deputy Special Representative, who was visiting the area.

The first incident, on 1 January, did not result in any fatalities; it was described by the local commander of the Abdul Wahid faction as a misunderstanding. The second attack, however, injured a UNAMID peacekeeper. Owing to the security situation on the ground, the Deputy Special Representative had to turn back, and an inter-organizational mission was preventing from getting to Anka. That led us to deliver humanitarian assistance by air.

Two days later, on 9 January, tensions rose in East Darfur when armed members of the Beni Halba tribe attacked and looted Massalit villages in the south of El Geneina, following the discovery of the death of a member of the tribe. The next day, residents of Mouli demonstrated against the attacks in El Geneina, forcing their way into Government buildings. Six people were killed by security forces in the scuffle. During the burial of those people on 11 January, the convoy was attacked by Arab militias resulting in two more Massalit deaths.

In total, according to Sudanese authorities, 5,000 people — exclusively from West Darfur — have been displaced by the violence and reached the town of El Geneina. We are not in a position to confirm that figure as Sudanese authorities have not granted access to either UNAMID or humanitarian organizations. It appears that in recent days the situation in the city of El Geneina has been stabilized by the deployment of the military and additional police forces. But it should be pointed out that crimes continue to be committed by armed groups in the villages surrounding the city.

As we know, on 1 January President Al-Bashir announced the extension of the unilateral ceasefire in the region of Jebel Marra. It must be noted, however, that incidents have occurred, aerial bombardments have resumed and clashes between Government forces and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid have actually intensified during the month of January. In Central Darfur, after the clashes in Guldo and Golo on 31 December and 1 January, and following the 2 January attack by members of the Abdul Wahid faction against a Government convoy near Nertiti, UNAMID witnessed the dropping of three bombs on 14 January; six bombs on 19 January in Sortoni in North Darfur; and five bombs near Nertiti in Central Darfur on 16 January. The Mission has received reports of four other air raids in North and Central Darfur on 16, 17, 22 and 23 January. Since 15 January, clashes between Government forces and elements of the Abdul Wahid faction in South and Central Darfur have also been observed.

These clashes have caused casualties on both sides. The United Nations is unable to verify the number of victims or to conduct a humanitarian assessment due to the restrictions imposed by the Government on access to conflict areas. In anticipation of a potentially large-scale displacement of the population, humanitarian organizations and the Mission have begun to develop an emergency plan. To date, 8,400 civilians, mostly women and children, have taken refuge around the UNAMID camp in Sortoni in North Darfur. In the other affected areas, the Mission has fortified its presence by increasing protection patrols, day and night, and has pre-positioned equipment and supplies.

(*spoke in English*)

Against the backdrop of renewed military confrontation, the political process to resolve the conflict through dialogue remains fragmented, and progress thus far has been limited. Major armed movements and opposition parties continue to boycott the current national dialogue framework. These groups continued consultations on the next steps, with the support of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. With respect to the Darfur peace process, the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minnawi held a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar in Paris on 11 January, and they pledged to develop a joint position paper on their concerns with respect to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, in particular in relation to compensation, disarmament and land ownership. There was also an informal meeting between the Government and the two groups that started on 23 January in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, but thus far the parties seem to remain divided on the role of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur and the High-level Implementation Panel in future negotiations. It is regrettable that Abdul Wahid Al-Nour has been absent from these talks. We call upon him to participate constructively in the efforts to find a resolution to the conflict.

The Darfur peace process remains inconclusive, and members will have heard that the Darfur Referendum Commission announced on 12 January that the referendum on the administrative status of Darfur would be conducted between 11 to 13 April 2016, in accordance with the terms of the Doha Document. Voter registration will commence on 8 February for those who have resided in Darfur for three months prior to the registration. While we welcome the preparations to hold the referendum, we note that the proposed timeline and eligibility criteria will most likely make it challenging for a large number of internally displaced persons and refugees to actually participate in the process.

These security and political developments point to a stark contrast between the views of the Government and those of the majority of the armed movements and their constituencies on the current situation in Darfur. In a similar vein, the Vice-President of the Sudan has indicated the closure of internally displaced person camps by the end of 2017. During his visit to North Darfur at the end of December 2015, he stated that Darfur had recovered from the war, but in reaction to the statement, the situation in the internally displaced person camp of Kalma actually deteriorated in January.

I regret to inform the Council that the visa situation remains precarious, with no major improvement in its overall status. Since the issuance of the previous report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/729), the Government has rejected another seven visa requests, including four that involved substantive civilian functions, and one for the post of Senior Joint Operations Officer. As a result of visa denials, there is a high vacancy rate in key substantive sections, which has been noted in previous briefings and in the report of the Secretary-General. And I must inform Council members that things have not really changed. The resultant loss of capacities in those sections of the Mission directly related to the strategic priorities of UNAMID, such as the protection of civilians, is of particular concern in light of the evolving situation in Jebel Marra and other areas.

With respect to progress relating to customs clearance, the Ministry of Finance and National Economy has released 195 containers that had been held in Port Sudan since 15 April 2015. Currently, UNAMID is seeking the urgent release of 108 containers of rations held in Port Sudan, for which the Ministry of Finance and National Economy needs to issue a tax exemption certificate for 2016. UNAMID submitted a request for the yearly renewal of that certificate in November 2015. We are now almost at the end of January.

In order to resolve these support-related issues, the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan held a technical meeting in Khartoum on 13 January. It was agreed that subcommittees would be established on the pending issues, such as visas and customs clearance, and that further technical-level meetings be convened on a monthly basis to unblock the bottlenecks relating to these logistical and administrative concerns.

With the new leadership of UNAMID on board, we hope that the Government will indeed extend its full support and cooperation towards the implementation of the strategic priorities of UNAMID. As mandated by the Security Council and by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, we remain committed to developing the exit strategy for UNAMID on the basis of concrete and tangible achievements against the benchmarks. A strategic-level meeting among the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of the Sudan is anticipated to take place by the end of this week in the margins of the forthcoming Summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa. We look forward to the full commitment of the Government of the Sudan to making measurable progress against key benchmarks — such as the cessation of hostilities, an inclusive peace process, and unhindered access and movement of United Nations and humanitarian personnel — as the starting point for further discussions on the phased drawdown of UNAMID.

Let me close by reiterating my concern about the impact of the renewed upsurge in fighting on the civilian population in Jebel Marra, and express my hope that the cessation of hostilities negotiations — with the participation of all the non-signatory movements, including Abdul Wahid Al-Nour— will come to a positive conclusion and bring to an end the suffering of the population caught up in the fighting between Government and rebel forces.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I congratulate the States that were recently elected as non-permanent members of the Security Council: the Arab Republic of Egypt, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay. We are confident that they will play an effective role in maintaining international peace and security, pursuant to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

I would also like to congratulate you, Sir, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Security Council this month. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on Darfur (S/2015/1027).

We do not agree with his briefing for three main reasons — in particular, because of his interpretation of developments in Jebel Marra and with regard to cooperation with the Mission on the issuance of visas. I will return to that point later.

The report of the Secretary-General states that

> "[t]he level of fighting between the Government forces and the armed movements was low during the reporting period [and that t]he number of intercommunal clashes over land and livestock also decreased" (*S/2105/1027, para. 2*).

It also states that

> "security measures adopted by State Governors (Walis) contributed to the significant reduction in the number of criminal incidents" (*ibid.*).

In paragraph 3, the report states that during the reporting period, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) received no information on clashes between Government forces and armed groups, with the exception of desperate attempts by members of the Sudan Liberation Army/ Abdul Wahid in East Jebel Marra.

The Security Council is well aware of the well-known position held by the Abdul Wahid faction, which continues to categorically reject any political settlement. It has rejected all regional and international appeals and mediation efforts made by the Joint Special Envoy of the African Union and the United Nations. Furthermore, in its resolutions, the Security Council maintains that a political solution is the only way to end the conflict. What, then, is the Council doing to stop the Abdul Wahid faction? The mediators have chided Abdul Wahid Al-Nour because he categorically refuses and rejects all appeals made by the Council to reach a political solution.

The Government of the Sudan has shown great patience and wisdom by not unilaterally excluding the Abdul Wahid faction from the ceasefire declaration that was renewed by His Excellency the President of the Republic, who has also offeed a series of guarantees in an effort to convince the leaders of the armed groups to join the national dialogue currently under way. How did Abdul Wahid react to the unilateral ceasefire announcement? Members of his faction launched a series of attacks on the villages of Tawani and Rokona, east of Jebel Marra. In addition, after attacking the markets in those two villages, a group headed by a certain Jaffar

Toutou proceeded to establish checkpoints to levy taxes on traders. On 1 January, faction forces cut off the route between Zalingei and Kourro, north of Jabel Marra.

What can the Government of the Sudan do? Elements of the faction also carried out attacks on patrols of the armed forces in the region of Rokoro that left two soldiers injured. What can the Government's armed forces do if the Abdul Wahid faction responds to the ceasefire declaration by attacking our soldiers? It is utterly unacceptable. Our armed forces are duty-bound and must shoulder their responsibility to protect civilians by extending State authority and restoring security in the villages targeted by the Abdul Wahid faction. The front lines of our armed forces — the sixteenth infantry division — were able to restore security and stability to East Jebel Marra.

With regard to the humanitarian situation in Darfur, the report of the Secretary-General states that "with the lull in armed confrontations, new displacements were minimal during the reporting period" (*ibid., para. 23*). I should have liked Mr. Ladsous to highlight that instead of putting forth his own reading of the facts. During the reporting period, there was a very low level of new displacement. The case reported in the region of Mouli involved a tribal incident that began with the discovery of the body of a herdsman on 9 January. The local authorities responded swiftly on 10 January, but unfortunately even the Prefect's entourage was attacked, leaving a number of people dead and wounded. During the attack, members of the rebel movement infiltrated the ranks of the assailants.

As we have stated previously, tribal clashes in Darfur are as old as Darfur itself. They have been largely contained thanks to the ongoing efforts of the Sudanese Government to strengthen the role of local leadership in reconciliation and settlement. Resources are at the heart of these clashes, and that has long been the case in Darfur. The fact is such clashes can be prevented only through development. Economic recovery and reconstruction will enable the Sudanese Government to complete its development projects in order to promote stability in Darfur. That is why we call on the international community to support the Sudanese Government by lifting the coercive economic sanctions that are hindering the completion of such plans in Darfur and in building the infrastructure and implementing the projects that are necessary to meet the needs of the people of Darfur. The settlement of the civil conflict in Darfur requires development, which above all requires the lifting of sanctions and debt forgiveness.

In raising the technical, administrative and logistical issues concerning UNAMID in his briefing, Mr. Ladsous overlooked the tripartite mechanism, which includes representatives of the Sudanese Government, the African Union and the United Nations and is responsible for considering those issues. The mechanism has made many recommendations over the past four years and, as the subject of visas has been addressed by those recommendations, we do not feel the need to address it here. In conjunction with the African Union, we have proposed that the mechanism meet on 29 and 30 January. We are still awaiting a response from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with regard to that meeting. These facts run counter to Mr. Ladsous' statement. We will also make this statement available to all Council members. However, in spite of the repeated calls of the Sudanese Government to restart its activities, the mechanism has stopped functioning.

In response to what the Under-Secretary-General has just said, I would like to stress that during the most recent period, the processing of the majority of visa applications and customs clearances for the containers has been accelerated. As of the most recent meeting on that issue, which took place on 14 January, 179 out of a total of 195 customs clearances had been issued for the containers in question. As members know, the customs procedures with regard to the containers in all States are not the purview of a single ministry, but of several different ministries and bodies. For our part, we opened an auxiliary office in Port Sudan mandated with closely monitoring all applications for customs procedures, but at the request of UNAMID that office was closed. The Government continues to call for its re-opening.

With regard to the issuance of visas, as shown in the chart to be distributed, in October 2015 we received 151 visa applications. Of those, 141 visas were issued and 4 applications are still being considered. Thus, the visa issuance rate in October was 93 per cent. In November, we received 281 applications, of which 272 were approved, which is an issuance rate of 96.79 per cent. In December, we received 213 applications, of which 206 were approved. That is an issuance rate of 96.71 per cent. That is the reality with regard to the issuance of visas during the reporting period. All of this demonstrates the extent to which UNAMID is benefitting from the cooperation of the Sudanese Government. We therefore

continue to assert that relaunching the joint mechanism would enable us to resolve those problems together instead of just continuing this sometimes pointless debate.

In that connection, in accordance with paragraphs 26 and 27 of resolution 2228 (2015), which renewed UNAMID's mandate last year, we reiterate the need for the Joint Working Group responsible for UNAMID's drawdown strategy to resume its meetings with a view to implementing the provisions of that and other pertinent resolutions in order to enable the Mission to best discharge the tasks mandated to it. That is especially important given that UNAMID is an African Mission and, as an African country, it is very important to the Sudan that the Mission be able to carry out its tasks.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.